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Davidson, Hon. J. H.

Annexation of Hawaii

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ANNEXATION OF HAWAII.

S P E E C H

OF

HON. JAMES H. DAVIDSON,

OF WISCONSIN,

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Tuesday, June 14, 1898.

WASHINGTON.

1898.

H. F. R.

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Mr. W. A. Smith

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S P E E C H
OF
HON. JAMES H. DAVIDSON.

The House having under consideration the joint resolution (H. Res. 259) to provide for annexing the Hawaiian Islands to the United States—

Mr. DAVIDSON of Wisconsin said:

Mr. SPEAKER: The subject under discussion, the annexation of Hawaii, is not a new one. For fifty years it has been before our people in one form or another, and during this time the leading statesmen and the best military and naval authorities of our country have expressed themselves in favor of the proposition.

In 1853 Secretary of State Marcy said:

It seems to be inevitable that they [the Sandwich Islands] must come under the control of this Government.

Prior to that time Webster, Buchanan, and Clayton had each expressed similar sentiments, while in later years Seward, Fish, and Blaine were of the same opinion. President Harrison was strongly in favor of annexation, and there is no question concerning the views of our present Chief Magistrate on this subject.

Captain Mahan, the well-known authority in naval affairs, says:

From a military point of view, the possession of Hawaii will strengthen the United States. It is not practicable for any trans-Pacific country to invest our Pacific coast without first occupying Hawaii as a base.

Chief Engineer Melville, of the Navy, says:

Pearl Harbor is the sole key to the full defense of our western shore, and that key should lie in our grasp only.

Admiral Dupont said:

It is impossible to estimate too highly the value and importance of the Sandwich Islands, whether in a commercial or military point of view. Should circumstances ever place them in our hands, they would prove the most important acquisition we could make in the whole Pacific Ocean, an acquisition intimately connected with our commercial and naval supremacy in those seas.

General Schofield, of the Army, says:

It constitutes the only natural outpost to the defenses on the Pacific coast. I have likened that harbor to a commanding position in front of a defensive line which an army in the field is compelled to occupy. The army must occupy that advanced position and hold it at whatever cost, or else the enemy will occupy it with his artillery and thus dominate the main line. If we do not occupy Pearl Harbor, our enemy will occupy it as a base from which to conduct operations against our Pacific coast. One of the greatest advantages of Pearl Harbor to us consists in the fact that no navy would be required to defend it. It is a deep, land-locked arm of the sea, easily defended by fortifications placed near its entrance, with its anchorage beyond the reach of guns from the ocean. The value of such a place of refuge and supplies for merchant marine and cruisers in time of war can hardly be overestimated, yet the greatest value to us of that wonderful harbor consists in the fact that its possession and adequate defense by us prevents the possibility of any enemy using it against us.

The logic of these statements is apparent when we remember that there is in the Pacific Ocean, from the equator to Alaska and from the coasts of China and Japan to the American continent, but one place where a passing vessel can obtain supplies or enter for repairs, and that place is Hawaii.

The expressions which I have quoted were made not when we were in the midst of a conflict with a foreign nation, but in a time of peace, when these eminent naval and military authorities and patriotic statesmen were looking to the perfection of our national defense, at which time they realized the importance of these islands as a strategic point from which the whole Pacific coast could be controlled.

The events of the last few weeks have demonstrated the wisdom of their judgment and shown the necessity of our having control of these islands.

No ship has yet been constructed which can cross the Pacific Ocean and engage in actual combat and still be in a position to return to its original port for supplies. No hostile fleet can possibly menace our Pacific coast without first obtaining control of Pearl Harbor, and we have found that the converse of this proposition is true—that it is impossible for us to send a fleet to the relief of Dewey at Manila, 7,000 miles from San Francisco, without having some place midway in that broad waste of waters where our vessels can enter for supplies and repairs and where our soldiers being thus transported may be permitted to land and be refreshed.

Through the kindness of the people of that little Republic our soldiers have been granted this privilege, and our vessels have been able to make use of this harbor.

That this is in violation of the laws of neutrality may be conceded, but there is a law higher than that of nations; it is the law of humanity, the law of God.

It is the observance of this higher law which has prompted the people of that Republic to jeopardize their own interests and endanger even the very existence of their Government in order that a favor might be extended to us.

In our present difficulty with Spain the Republic of Hawaii stands alone, a single exception among the nations of the earth, the only one that has extended a helping hand to us. And why is this? Because for years the people of those islands were crushed beneath the despotism of a rotten kingdom, but now they are enjoying the blessings of freedom, and they appreciate, as do not the crowned kingdoms of the earth, how high and noble is our purpose in this war with Spain. They see in the Stars and Stripes a harbinger of freedom, a refuge and strength to suffering humanity, and they gladly bid us enter.

You who fail to see the necessity of the annexation of those islands at this time think what might have been the result had Dewey's attack at Manila resulted disastrously, and he been compelled to turn back and traverse a distance of 7,000 miles before he could reach a harbor for repairs or for supplies. Had such been the result, instead of having a fleet, the pride of our nation, floating so majestically and victoriously in the harbor of Manila, those ships would ere this have been but broken hulks, dead, deserted derelicts, drifting aimlessly in that broad sea.

The principal argument of the gentlemen who are opposed to this proposition is that it is unconstitutional. There are cer-

tain gentlemen in this Chamber before whose eyes the Constitution ever stands an impassable barrier to everything which looks to the advancement of civilization or to the progress of our country.

Some of these gentlemen years ago failed to understand aright the terms of the Constitution, and it seems the passing years have not added wisdom to their understanding. Sufficient answer to the objection is that the same question has been raised five times during our national history. It has been brought forward every time a proposition for the acquisition of territory has been presented and as often has it been passed upon and overruled, so that it now has no standing in court.

The people and the Government of Hawaii have offered these islands to us. To accept their offer will not take from the Treasury of the United States one dollar nor from the American people one drop of blood. Failing to accept their offer, we are forever estopped from objecting if a like offer should at some future time be made to and accepted by some other nation.

We can not be heard to say that we will not annex these islands ourselves and in the same breath that we will not permit any other nation to annex them.

It is well known that within a century these islands have at four different times been possessed by other nations, and their present independence has only been attained after a heroic struggle. The future stability of this little Republic is uncertain. Standing alone, without wealth, without population, it can hardly hold its own against more powerful nations, and should we fail to control or protect it, it will undoubtedly soon be acquired, peacefully or otherwise, by some of the great powers.

I am opposed to maintaining a protectorate over any country. Our nation should never assume the responsibilities of another nation except under such conditions as will enable us to dictate the laws of that nation and compel their observance.

I do not profess to be versed in military affairs. Whether the annexation of these islands is a military necessity at this time is a question, however, upon which I am willing to accept the opinion of military authorities, and when we know that not only the best military authorities have expressed themselves in favor of annexation, but that our present Chief Magistrate believes that in order to successfully prosecute the present war it is necessary to secure these islands as a base of supplies, I for one am prepared to accept their judgment and vote accordingly.

I propose to support the President in everything which he believes is necessary for the successful prosecution of this war, and I know that in so doing I represent the united sentiment of the people of my district.

This question of annexation has for fifty years been an open and debatable one; but it seems to me that when Admiral Dewey's guns awoke the echoes in Manila Harbor on the morning of the 1st of May, they "moved the previous question" upon this proposition, and from that time debate has not been in order.

Prior to that date our people undoubtedly were divided upon this proposition, but I believe they are no longer divided. They realize the necessity of the acquisition of these islands at the present time, in order that the boys who have gone from your town and from mine, from every hamlet over this broad land, to defend the honor and the integrity of the nation and to bring relief to suffering humanity may find within that broad expanse of water

some place where their feet may touch mother earth, where they can breathe the pure air, and where the vessels bearing them may be supplied with coal and bread and water, to the end that their expedition may result successfully and to the honor of the American people.

But there is another reason why these resolutions should be adopted. Year after year there has come to us from across the seas rumors of trouble in those Eastern countries. Year after year there have been indications that the great powers might become involved in a war over their Eastern possessions. Japan, which lately surprised the world by its defeat of China, is one of the coming nations of the world, and with its magnificent navy and with the energy and progress of its citizens it will soon become a strong competitor of England, of Russia, and of Germany.

China as a nation has been dead for years. It has not kept pace with the advancement of the nations around it. It may revive and progress. Failing to do this, however, this great Empire will soon be a thing of the past. Its territory will be divided among the great powers, each portion being subject in all its trade relations to the power which controls it.

Ours is a nation of peace and progression. Its broad acres are now all under cultivation. Its cities are black with the smoke of furnaces, its workmen busily employed in the manufacture of every article capable of construction. To continue this condition of things our people, our manufacturers, our farmers must seek a foreign market. If we are to furnish employment for the brain and brawn and muscle of our mechanics, we must find a market for the wares they construct. If those engaged in agricultural pursuits are to prosper, a market must be found for their surplus grain.

The Latin-American countries and the great Eastern countries offer the best opportunities for acquiring such a market. Our competitors will be England, Germany, Austria, and Russia. To successfully compete with them we must take advantage of every opportunity which offers. Within the next few years our people will awake to the necessity of the construction of the Nicaragua Canal and its control by this Government. That canal, when completed, will become the gateway through which will pass the commerce of the world. Then Cuba and Puerto Rico will stand as sentinels guarding its eastern approach, while on the west will be the impregnable fortress of Pearl Harbor, a strong factor in shaping and controlling the commerce of the Western Continent. Being a part of our possessions, Hawaii's trade will be entirely subject to our control. Not only this, but every vessel passing in either direction across the Pacific must touch at this point before reaching its destination.

With these islands under our control, our trade relations will be established and our commercial interests in the East forever protected.

It can not be said that the policy of our nation has been one of territorial acquisition. We have not aspired to the attainment of colonial possessions. The islands of the seas have not been to us prizes toward which we have looked with longing eyes, but we have, from time to time, acquired such territory as seemed to be necessary for the best interests of our nation; and should these resolutions prevail and Hawaii be annexed, it does not necessarily follow, nor is it possible, that such action will have any influence upon the future. It stands a single and independent proposition,

to be determined upon its merits and in such a manner as will be for the best interests of our country.

Some gentlemen are loud in their declarations that the war in which we are engaged has now become one of conquest and that the policy of our nation from now will be one of territorial acquisition. These statements have been made with reckless disregard for accuracy and truth, and there is absolutely nothing to substantiate them. The possession of the Philippines, the possession of Puerto Rico, the possession of Cuba, yea, even the possession of Madrid itself, if these should finally be possessed by American armies, will be but incidents of a war commenced for the cause of humanity and prosecuted only for that purpose.

A war can not be successfully prosecuted and every movement confined to the immediate scene of action. In order that this war may be successfully waged, the power of the enemy must be weakened and destroyed. Her fleets must be driven from the seas, her forts must be destroyed, her armies captured, her territory acquired. These are the lines along which the war must be waged, and these are the lines along which the present Administration will prosecute, vigorously and effectively, the present war until the Kingdom of Spain is ready to cry, "Hold, enough!"

The question as to what will be done with the territory acquired by our armies during the present war is no part of the subject now under discussion. The disposition of all such territory will be determined when the war is over. The Philippines are now, or soon will be, entirely under the control of the American Army. The flag of freedom, the Stars and Stripes, will float where once floated the red and yellow of the Spanish Kingdom. Whether the Stars and Stripes shall come down and the flag of despotism, of tyranny, and of treachery be again restored is a question which can safely be left to the American people for disposition at the proper time, without fear but what it will be settled right—right in the eyes of humanity, right in the eyes of God.

The gentlemen upon the other side of this Chamber need have no fear of the future of this Republic. It is safe in the hands of the people, safe in the hands of those chosen by the people to administer its affairs.

Mr. Speaker, I am in favor of the adoption of these resolutions. Aside from the question of their commercial importance, it is sufficient that the acquisition of these islands at this time is a war necessity. This being true, I believe we should acquire them.

Our hearts, our hopes are with the boys who have gone to the front, and, whether their destiny be Cuba, Puerto Rico, or Manila, our every action should be for their best interests. Let us not hesitate, let us not put aside this opportunity of establishing a base of supplies midway between our own coast and the future battlefield whereon our soldiers will soon be engaged in actual conflict—a battlefield a portion of which will undoubtedly become for all time a sacred spot to which the longing eyes of many a mother will turn as she remembers that in that far distant land her son lies sleeping, his life given for the cause of humanity and for the preservation of his nation's honor. [Applause.]

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